

SUNDAY, NOV. 28, 1976

# Little Bluestem Prairie

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## Cleanup Day Set Dec. 3

*Parks and Recreation (Vigo Co.)*

The Little Bluestem Prairie Committee plans a cleanup day on Friday, Dec. 3, beginning at 2 p.m. at the 6½ acres north of Terre Haute on U.S. 41, according to Dr. M.L. Jackson, chairman.

The Vigo County Park and Recreation Department will provide a truck to haul away the debris that has accumulated in the area through the years.

Indiana State University will manage and preserve the tiny wilderness as a nature center, open to the public on a controlled basis.

The Little Bluestem Prairie is the last known example of sand or hill prairie in Indiana.

This valuable land has just been sold by Freitag-Weinhardt, Inc., to the Nature Conservancy, for \$10,000. The title will be transferred to ISU after the ISU Foundation and the Nature Conservancy raise \$5,000 to pay for the site.

Acquisition of the little prairie and all its flora and fauna for use as an outdoor nature lab has taken several years to accomplish.

Invitations are being extended to ISU President Dr. Richard G. Landini, Terre Haute Mayor William J. Brighton, Pete Farmer, president of Freitag-Weinhardt, Inc.; the Vigo County Commissioners and members of the

County Park Board to be on hand in work clothes and gloves when the cleanup begins.

Several representatives of the Nature Conservancy are also expected to be here for the cleanup.

The work will be done under Dr. Jackson's direction, with a dozen or more ISU students devoting their afternoon to the project.

Dr. Jackson said that the low key fund raising is at the halfway point. Contributions are tax deductible and may be made with Dr. Marshall Parks, ISU Science Teaching Center, treasurer of the Little Bluestem Prairie Committee.

Individuals or organizations contributing \$50 or more toward Little Bluestem will have their names permanently recorded on a plaque at the nature center.

After the fall cleanup, Dr. Jackson will be better able to determine the next steps to be taken to prepare the area. Some kind of a boardwalk will be constructed, to protect the fragile plant life. And masses of black locust trees will have to be thinned out, so as not to choke the growth of prairie grasses.

Freitag-Weinhardt has agreed to prepare and maintain a small visitor area that will have parking space for several cars at the entrance to the soon-to-be "Outdoor lab."

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# Little Bluestem Prairie Land Here To Be Preserved

By CAROLYN TOOPS  
Tribune Staff Writer

A small part of a vanishing Indiana landscape right here in Vigo County is going to be preserved for future generations, and two people who couldn't be happier are Vigo County Park and Recreation Superintendent Keith Ruble and Indiana State University Professor Dr. Marion T. Jackson of the Life Sciences Department.

Known as Little Bluestem Prairie, this tiny vanishing wilderness lies on the north edge of Terre Haute along U.S. 41 and is the last known example of sand or hill prairie in Indiana.

Only an accident of history left this 6 1/2 acre patch of virgin prairie surrounded by farm land and industrial development. It will be maintained as a unique laboratory for the study of Indiana's flora original flora and fauna. Because of its small size, it will have to be carefully protected but it will be a part of the Indiana Nature Preserve System and open to the public on a controlled basis.

The valuable land, owned by Freitag-Weinhardt, Inc., is to be sold to the Nature Conservancy in a few weeks. The title will be transferred to Indiana State University after the ISU Foundation and the Nature Conservancy have raised the \$10,000 to pay for the site.

The exact role of the county park department in future operation of the "outdoor nature lab" at Little Bluestem Prairie is not yet known. Originally Ruble had hoped that the park department could acquire the land. Present plans call for ISU to manage the preserve for research and study and limited public use.

In any event, Ruble will continue to work closely with Dr. Jackson in preserving Little Bluestem.

The two men looked over the area last week, planning for a cleanup of debris in the spring, perhaps, and discussing methods of thinning out the masses of black locust trees that are choking the growth of Little Bluestem and other grasses in several sections.

And due to the interest of the founder of Freitag-Weinhardt, Inc., the firm has offered to prepare and maintain a visitor area that will have parking space for several cars.

Some kind of a boardwalk is also being considered by Jackson and Ruble, to protect the fragile plant life. But that's in the not-too-far distant future, and the work day or days will come first.

There is a sound basis for preserving the area. Biologists say that the grass clumps have remained in the same pattern for many decades in this bit of "vanishing prairie." Certain plants are found here which have been recorded elsewhere in Indiana only on the sand dunes along the northern border.

In this dry prairie, directly beneath the clumps of little bluestem, the soil is of the black prairie type, while between the clumps the sand is scarcely darkened.

In addition to the black locusts (used much for fence posts) other trees are black oak, wild black cherry, honey locust, and others.

Both Ruble and Jackson are active in the Nature Conservancy, a national tax exempt conservation organization whose resources are solely devoted to the preservation of ecologically significant natural land.

The ISU Foundation and the Nature Conservancy will each raise \$5,000 for Little Bluestem Prairie. A local committee is forming to assist in the fund raising. It includes Ruble,

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Jackson and his wife Gloria, Homer and Alice Kieweg, Bill Fields, Cindy Dunlap, Jim and Amy Mason, John Whitaker, Jack Munsee, Marshall Parks, Ron Helms, Leo Wheatley; also Helmut Kohnke, West Lafayette, Don Lacey, Madison; Dennis Wolkoff, Indiana Chapter, National Conservancy, and Elaine Caldwell, also National Conservancy.

Individuals or organizations contributing \$50 or more

toward Little Bluestem Prairie will have their names permanently recorded on a plaque at the nature center, Dr. Jackson said.

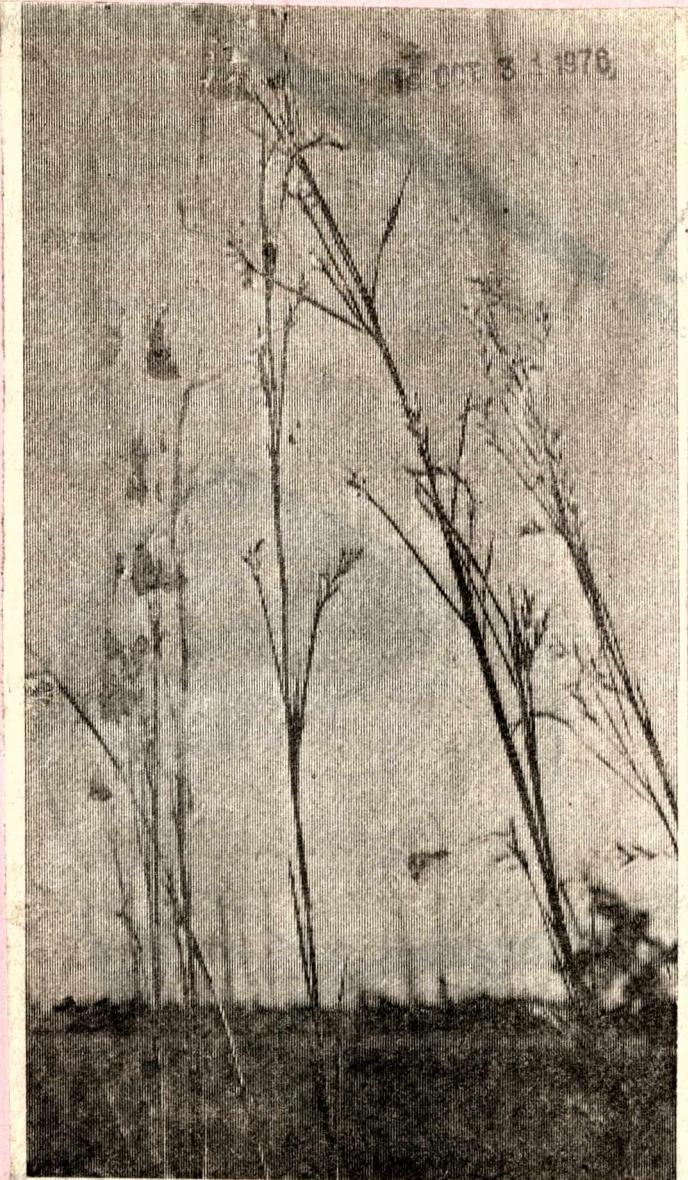
Contributions are tax deductible, and may be sent to Little

Bluestem Prairie Committee, attention Dr. Marshall Parks, ISU Science Teaching Center. Others wishing to volunteer for such chores as the cleanup and fund raising may contact Keith Ruble.

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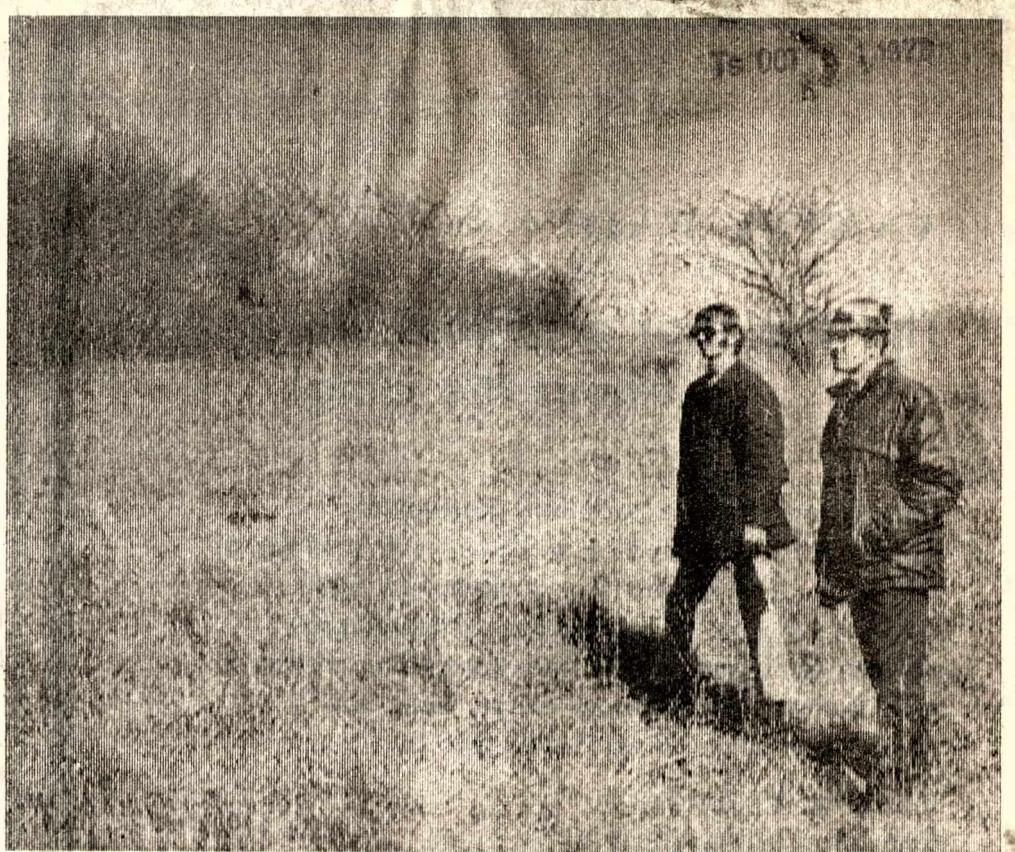
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THIS PRAIRIE GRASS, part of Indiana's original flora and fauna, grows north of Terre Haute in a small area that is to be preserved for future generations as a remarkable example of Vigo County's only remaining prairie. The site is called Little Bluestem Prairie and will serve as a nature laboratory. Efforts are under way to raise \$10,000 to pay for the 6½ acre parcel by the Nature Conservancy, the ISU Foundation and interested citizens.

House of Photpgraphy Photo



LITTLE BLUESTEM PRAIRIE, a few miles north of Terre Haute, is going to be a magnificent "outdoor lab" one of these days. Vigo County Park and Recreation, Superintendent Keith Ruble and ISU Life Sciences Professor D. Marion Jackson are shown at the site, with a grove of fast-growing and thick black locusts in the background. This tiny 6½ acre patch is the last known example of sand or hill prairie in Indiana. It is to be acquired through the efforts of many dedicated conservationists and is to become a part of the Indiana Nature Preserve System and open to the public on a controlled basis.

House of Photography Photo

ISU Parks & Recreation (Vigo Co)  
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ISU STUDENT VICKY WELLS has added a new T-shirt to her collection. The message "I Saved the Grass" refers to local efforts to raise funds to purchase a small tract of land just north of Terre Haute that contains the last remaining stand of Little Bluestem Prairie Grass in the state. The area will be used for nature study and will be managed by Indiana State University. The Little Bluestem Committee will conclude its fund-raising efforts by sponsoring a musical program Thursday, March 3 at 8 p.m. at Tilson Music Hall, featuring "The Band With No Name." Tickets will be available at the door (\$1 each) and the commemorative T-shirts may also be ordered. Two of the biggest boosters of Little Bluestem Prairie are Dr. Marion Jackson of ISU and Vigo County Park and Recreation Superintendent Keith Ruble.

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